

Mr. Chairman and Members of The Committee,

My name is Jim McNeill and I'm from Richmond, a suburb of Houston, Texas. I am retired and a volunteer worker in the InnerChange Freedom Initiative Ministry, a branch of Prison Fellowship.

I, along with my wife, moved from West Texas to the Houston area seven years ago, to be near our five children and to watch our eleven grandchildren grow up.

Shortly after moving, I was invited to a Church Missions Meeting and was introduced to the InnerChange Ministry. After a visit there I signed on as a volunteer worker, counseling and setting up the Substance Abuse curriculum. For years I had been concerned about the prison population explosion and offenders going to prison at an early age and continuing to return. When they have reached their forties they see life slipping by, and by this time don't know how to function in society. There are many prison ministries that are very good, but I saw in the InnerChange Ministry one that worked with the offenders after release. During this time frame my wife and I started mentoring offenders who were enrolled in the Ministry. To date we have mentored twelve fellows. Two have returned to prison, much to our disappointment, and eight are out and doing quiet well and two have not been released yet. All of these fellows and their families are our extended family. They call us regularly, visit with us in our home, take care of us, consult us on their living and family problems, even help with chores at our home. Our home is their home and our door is open to all of them. They continue to bless my wife and me and give us a lot of pleasure.

Let me close in commending you on your task in prison reform. It must be addressed and dealt with. Rehabilitation has got to be brought off the back burner. These people must be prepared to take their responsible places in our society and be productive citizens and positive family members. As a closing thought for you, more tax monies are being spent in our State on prisons than on public education.

Thank You

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